

# BUCKEYE SPORTS BULLETIN

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Vol. 29, No. 14

“For The Buckeye Fan Who Needs To Know More”

January 16, 2010

## Pryor, Buckeyes Bloom In Rose Bowl



SONNY BROCKWAY

ANOTHER FOR THE TROPHY CASE – Acting Tournament of Roses president Jeff Throop (left) hands the 2010 Rose Bowl championship trophy to Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel (center) as offensive game MVP Terrelle Pryor (2) and the rest of the Buckeyes watch. Ohio State defeated Oregon 26-17 on New Year’s Day to win “The Granddaddy of Them All.”

## QB Pushes Ohio State To Victory Over Oregon

By JEFF SVOBODA  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

While in Southern California, the Ohio State football team was treated to a day at Disneyland, the theme park where dreams purportedly come true.

For the Buckeyes, the Rose Bowl stadium about 40 miles away in Pasadena truly was the place where their fantasies came to life.

Ohio State brushed aside the national predictions and put away Oregon by a 26-17 score on New Year’s Day in the 96th Rose Bowl Game, memorably putting to an end a grating streak of three straight Bowl Championship Series losses that left fans and media pundits across the country doubting whether the Buckeyes could ever again compete at the national level against a high-caliber opponent.

At the conclusion of a picture-perfect day capped by a stunning sunset on the San Gabriel Mountains that left the crowd abuzz, the final few moments of the game were just as welcome a sight as the natural beauty to the Buckeyes and their fans.

As the clock ticked toward zeroes and Ohio State held the ball, Buckeye fans – and even some players on the sideline – jumped and cheered to “Seven Nation Army,” the White Stripes tune that has become the unofficial team theme song. Flashbulbs popped as it became clearer by the moment that the frustration that had started in the desert three years ago would be coming to an end.

Amid the celebration, there wasn’t much doubt the Buckeyes found the Rose Bowl to be the happiest place on earth.

“I can’t even begin to describe the feeling,” OSU sophomore center Michael Brewster said. “I’m tired as hell and both my ankles are hurting like hell, but I’m also happy as hell. I’m going to wake up tomorrow with a smile on my face.”

That smile was equaled by Brewster’s good friend and classmate, Terrelle Pryor. From the moment the game concluded, Pryor beamed his way through the team’s celebration and then bounced from interview to interview. In the wake of his best performance as a Buckeye, everyone wanted a piece of the sophomore quarterback.

And why wouldn’t they?

The Ohio State game plan put the game squarely in Pryor’s hands, and the sophomore produced 338 total yards, two touchdowns and a bevy of good throws and good decisions while earning offensive MVP honors and putting himself in the preseason conversation for the 2010 Heisman Trophy.

None of the individual stuff seemed to matter, though, as he spent the postgame interviews talking mostly of his teammates.

“I’m just glad to be part of this team,” he said. “(The MVP award) is big, but I love my teammates and the

## Gibson Only Jr. Leaving

By MARCUS HARTMAN  
Buckeye Sports Bulletin Staff Writer

For Ohio State fans, two out of three wasn’t bad Jan. 5 when a trio of juniors announced their intentions for the 2010 football season.

While the first news of the day had Thaddeus Gibson declaring he would skip his final year of eligibility in favor of entering the NFL draft, soon after came word that Cameron Heyward and Chimdi Chekwa would not.

A day later, Ross Homan followed the lead of Heyward and Chekwa, a move that left the Buckeye faithful feeling very good about a veteran defensive unit for 2010.

All four players in question were part of what was the nation’s No. 5 defense in terms of points and yards allowed, and though Gibson will be missed at one end, defensive coordinator Jim Heacock will surely welcome back Heyward at the other along with Homan at linebacker and Chekwa at cornerback.

In all, the Ohio State defense expects to return six starters – two at each of the three levels – and the juniors both staying and going said they have full faith in the candidates who remain to fill in the cracks.

“We have great depth,” Homan said. “We’ll have some of the young guys stepping up and coming in like Etienne Sabino and hopefully Tyler Moeller coming back from injury, hopefully Andrew Sweat coming back from injury. We’ve got some younger guys – Jon Newsome, Dorian Bell, Storm Klein – so we’ve got some great depth coming back at linebacker.”

Similar feelings about the secondary, where Devon Torrence returns as the other starting cornerback but starting safeties Kurt Coleman and Anderson Russell must be replaced, helped Chekwa feel comfortable making his decision based on what was best for him without worrying much about how the team would cope.

“At Ohio State, you have guys who can step in,” Chekwa said. “If I was to leave, I think you’d have guys like Travis Howard and Donnie Eeveg who could just step up and play next year, so I don’t think my leaving would hurt the team too much. I think they would lose somebody who could be a leader but ultimately they would have someone who would replace me.”

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## OPINION

**Big-Game Gorilla Finally Off OSU's Back**

As the sun set on the San Gabriel Mountains, appropriately turning the Arroyo Seco into a breathtaking shade of scarlet, the Ohio State football team took the first step toward slaying the 800-pound gorilla that had taken up residence in the Woody Hayes Athletic Center these past three years.

Since failing to show up for the 2007 BCS National Championship Game against Florida, the Buckeyes have been reduced – outside the Midwest, at least – to something of a water-cooler joke. ESPN and its chorus of chattering chowderheads promulgated that theory, of course, and with no counter to its cacophony of clowns masquerading as analysts, whatever ESPN says usually goes.

To be fair, however, Ohio State did next to nothing to dispel the argument it was playing old-fashioned football in an old-fashioned conference and had virtually no chance whenever going up against the sleek, modern offensive machines of today's game.

Before the Rose Bowl against No. 7 Oregon, and since that thrilling 42-39 victory over second-ranked Michigan at the end of the 2006 regular season, the Buckeyes had played six games against teams ranked among the top 10 in the Associated Press writers' poll and lost them all. Worse than the losses themselves was the manner in which OSU performed during its big-game failures. Three of the defeats came by two touchdowns or more, and the team was out-scored by a 169-73 overall margin in those six losses.

Is it any wonder OSU was always written off before entering the big stage, why some even within the Buckeye Nation began to swallow the spiked punch ESPN was serving?

I know firsthand that Oregon's players, coaches and fans were drinking from that punch bowl. In the days leading to the Rose Bowl, several members of the Ducks were so confident of a victory they were chirping like playing the game was simply a formality.

Even head coach Chip Kelly seemed to fall victim to the pregame hype. One day before the game, when asked if he was worried about Ohio State trying to play ball-control offense, the first-year coach replied, "Just because we're a quick-strike offense doesn't mean that our defense has to be on the field for an inordinate amount of time. That's entirely up to us. We all control time of possession, so if we go down and score real fast, then our job on defense is get them off the field real fast."

To say Kelly underestimated his opponent would be an understatement.

Meanwhile, Oregon fans circulating in and around the Rose Bowl on game day seemed convinced their team would score at least 40 on the Buckeyes. "Why not?" said one fan decked out in green and yellow. "We hung 47 on USC. How many did you score? 13? This won't even be close."

You have to admire the fan's myopic preview of the game, but facts are the one thing die-hard fans usually don't take into consideration. Ohio State ranked No. 5 nationally in total defense. USC was No. 40. The cold, hard truth no Duck wanted to hear before the game was that their team had faced only one top-20 defense all season, and that resulted in a 19-8 loss to Boise State.

To be honest, that big-game gorilla on the backs of the Buckeyes began shrinking last year. Ohio State came oh-so-close in losses to Penn State and Texas last season and again vs. USC early in the 2009 campaign that one could make the argument the Buckeyes had already turned the big-game corner. They had just forgotten how to win those games.

**EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK**  
with  
**Mark Rea**

I realize that kind of argument is too simplistic for those who theorize Ohio State as the superior team in every game it plays, and therefore losses must be attributed to something much more sinister such as play-calling or overrated players. Those conspiracy theorists tend to forget the John Cooper era when several more talented OSU teams regularly lost games they never should have lost – likely because they had simply become accustomed to something going wrong. In other words, they had forgotten how to win the close ones.

In most athletic endeavors, getting to the hump has always been the easiest of tasks. Plenty of teams throughout the country periodically rise to the level of conference champion only to fall back into mediocrity. Getting over that mythical hump – that's what separates the great programs from all the rest.

Now that the Buckeyes have grabbed that big-game gorilla and kicked his butt into the street with a convincing victory over the previously-unstoppable Ducks, where do they go from here? Do they continue to content themselves with a string of Big Ten championships and victories over Michigan, or do they take the next step? With as many as nine Rose Bowl starters back on offense and seven more on defense, the team certainly seems positioned to make a run at the 2010 national championship.

And wouldn't that be a fitting way to finally shut the critics up once and for all?

It was Ohio State, after all, by not showing up to play Florida that got all this nonsense started about how great the SEC is and how bad the Big Ten is. It seems to me the perfect way to end all that blather would be for the Buckeyes to go to the Arizona desert next January against defending national champion Alabama and bring that crystal football back home.

**How Do You Like Him Now?**

I get more than my fair share of letters here at BSB world headquarters. Some of them are complimentary, others not so much. Some of my pen pals sign their submissions while many of the critics prefer to remain anonymous for obvious reasons.

Following a column I wrote for the Nov. 14 issue of BSB, I received an e-mail missive from the anonymous camp that took particular exception to my thoughts about Ohio State quarterback Terrelle Pryor.

To say that we didn't see eye to eye on the sophomore QB would be understating things a wee bit, but you can judge for yourself.

Part of what I wrote in that column after Pryor had led the Buckeyes to a victory at Penn State: "Let me tell you that this guy is already the real deal and he's only going to get better. I'll tell you one more thing: Pryor is going to be a legitimate Heisman Trophy candidate beginning next season. In fact, he should be one of the preseason favorites."

The e-mailer's response: "You are an idiot of the highest degree. Yes, we beat Penn State, which was a totally overrated team. Even so, anyone could see that the offense has been dumbed down because (Jim) Tressel has finally figured out that Pryor cannot

grasp anything but the most basic plays. He will end up losing more games for the Buckeyes than he will ever win."

I couldn't help wondering what my electronic pen pal was thinking as he watched Pryor accept the trophy for being the Rose Bowl's outstanding offensive player.

Despite playing with a painful knee injury that will likely require offseason surgery, Pryor still managed to run for a game-high 72 yards while completing 23 of 37 passes for 266 yards – all career highs – and two touchdowns.

After two seasons, marked as much by off-the-field criticism for everything from what he wears on his eye-black to where he sits on the bench when the opposing team has the ball, Pryor has quietly put together some awesome statistics. He has thrown for 3,405 yards and run for 1,410 more, giving him 4,815 yards of total offense that already ranks 11th all-time at Ohio State.

Oh, yeah. One more thing. Pryor is now 19-3 as the starting quarterback for the Buckeyes.

You still want to tell me he doesn't have the bona fides to be a legitimate candidate for the Heisman next season? My inbox is waiting.

**A Word About Tressel**

What did you think about the circus that surrounded the Mike Leach debacle at Texas Tech? What about Jim Leavitt of South Florida and Mark Mangino of Kansas being dismissed for physical and/or verbal abuse of their players?

What was your opinion of the ego trip taken by Urban Meyer as he struggled with the decision whether or not to leave the stage at Florida? Do you have a take on Pete Carroll looking guilty as hell as he left USC a half-step before the NCAA hammer falls on his program?

Every one of the aforementioned coaches has had his share of success, but with that success has come a heavy price for the programs they have left in tatters. Do you seriously believe anything like that will happen at Ohio State as long as Jim Tressel is head coach?

I know Tressel has his detractors going back to his Youngstown State days. Anyone who has been a head coach for nearly a quarter-century has to have rubbed at least some people the wrong way. Most of his critics, however, are simply jealous, enraged at the fact Tressel can consistently produce championship teams without the seemingly prerequisite drama.

Even more amazing is how Tressel manages to be successful without drawing attention to himself. No ridiculous personifications of his character. No public berating of his players or coaching staff. No press conferences called specifically to draw attention to himself. No rules violations that he refuses to deal with and simply hopes will go away on their own.

I'm not trying to be Tressel's personal public relations guy because he doesn't need one. But I will tell you this: Ohio State fans should thank their lucky stars each and every day that Jim Tressel is the face of their favorite program.

There has been a debate lately over whether the Buckeyes are one of college football's elite programs. Here is my argument: An elite program isn't determined solely by wins and losses. Character of the head coach must also be taken into account, and if that truly is the criteria, Ohio State is among the elite of the elite programs and you can count the rest of them on the fingers of one hand.

## COVER STORY: PRYOR, BUCKEYES BLOOM IN ROSE BOWL

# QB's Performance Highlights Bowl Victory

Continued From Page 1

defense – giving us a chance to have the ball – and the coaches. Everyone gets this award. I might give it to the linemen.”

Such words were fitting considering Ohio State's late-season improvement came after Pryor reached arguably his lowest point as a Buckeye. In an Oct. 17 game at Purdue, Pryor committed four turnovers as Ohio State lost a stunning 26-18 contest to the Boilermakers, and the quarterback's on-field demeanor came under fire when he was publicly unhappy with his teammates on the Ross-Ade Stadium field.

While the rest of the college football world questioned both his play and his function in the OSU attack, Pryor set about righting the ship, calling a meeting of the offensive unit and saying he'd begin to take his role as both quarterback and leader of the team more seriously.

In the next five games, Pryor combined for nine touchdowns and only two turnovers, but he took a backseat in the game plan as he fought a leg injury and the offense became more oriented toward running the ball with tailbacks Dan “Boom” Herron and Brandon Saine.

Along the way, Pryor was repeatedly asked if he felt the team was using his talents to their fullest. He always responded positively, but some comments after the Rose Bowl seemed to show it wasn't an ideal situation.

“Don't get me wrong, as a quarterback you don't like running the ball,” Pryor said. “It's kind of like being selfish, but you know, that's not what we need. This is a big-time

organization – Ohio State – and if you have to run the ball to win the game, that's what you do. Whatever we need, I'll take it for a W.”

But by the time the Rose Bowl came along, head coach Jim Tressel had different plans. The contest in Pasadena served as the midway point of Pryor's college eligibility, and the offensive staff saw it as time to push the quarterback's much-debated development into overdrive.

“We felt this was a pivotal game because it marked the end of the first half of his career and we needed to progress a little bit more,” Tressel said. “I think we did. We have some very definitive goals as to how good we would like to be and how good he would like to be at his craft. I thought tonight was a good step.”

The Buckeyes made their goal clear from the very beginning. Ohio State started the game with the football, and Pryor led a 10-play, 74-yard drive that ended with a 13-yard touchdown pass to Saine that gave OSU a 7-0 lead. Eight of the plays on the drive were passes, and another was a tone-setting, 24-yard scramble on third down by Pryor. Only one play during the march was a tailback run.

“That was our game plan – to wing it today,” Pryor said. “We got a lot better at it, and the receivers got a lot better with their routes. The coaches, I'm glad they have a little bit of faith in my ability to wing the ball a little bit.”

When the game was over, Pryor had completed 23 of 37 passes for 266 yards, all of which were career bests, while throwing two touchdown passes and one interception.

That came in stark contrast to the 17 passes he threw in each of Ohio State's three November contests, and his performance was much better than it was when he hit his previous career high of 31 passes – which, perhaps appropriately, came in the loss at Purdue.

Pryor admitted that he had previously been forcing plays and playing hesitantly, traits that started to disappear as he improved throughout the team's postseason practice sessions.

“I've gotten a lot better in this bowl practice – a lot better,” Pryor said. “(I've been) just meeting with Coach Tressel all the time, about 10 minutes a day, staying in the film room, studying the film a lot more, and it helps a lot.”

The performance impressed observers and teammates alike.

“He's a great player,” said classmate and wideout DeVier Posey, the other recipient of a Pryor touchdown pass. “Tonight, he asserted himself as a passer on the grand stage. It's just really big for him and big for the team.”

Pryor said that he felt he could have a game like the one he had in the Rose Bowl at any time, but the timing was right that it came on such an important stage – and after he'd had his responsibilities reduced a bit in the offense during the final quintet of games.

Afterward, he was asked if this is the type of victory he had hoped to supply while in charge of the Buckeyes, and his answer was yet again fitting for a player whose growth echoed that of an accomplished team by year's end.

“I don't know how to answer,” Pryor said.

“I'm just so glad to be a part of this team, with how hard we work and where we want to be. And these seniors – we needed to come out and win for these seniors.”

## Ending The Trend

Before the game, the national perception of the Ohio State program had deteriorated to the point that some of the elder statesmen of the team may have gone to Disneyland to wish upon a star for a victory.

The problems started when the Buckeyes cruised through the 2006 regular season before losing the national title game to Florida. After that came the string of familiar big-game losses to high-quality foes – Illinois and LSU in 2007 before a trio of losses to USC, Penn State and Texas last year and a final disappointment this year to USC.

With each loss, frustration in the Buckeye Nation fan base rose as Ohio State was battered by national fans and pundits, many of whom said the Buckeyes – or any team from the Big Ten, for that matter – no longer had the manpower to compete against the best.

And Oregon, with its offense trending toward unstoppable near the end of the season, qualified in that regard on one side of the ball. Even the Ducks chipped in, exuding a confidence bordering on cockiness in media sessions before the game.

Suffice it to say, the Buckeyes – who were so ready, Tressel said, that they didn't even practice the two days before the game – were plenty fired up by the time kickoff rolled around.

“We heard all week that Oregon was better than us, faster than us,” OSU senior tight end Jake Ballard said. “During media day, I

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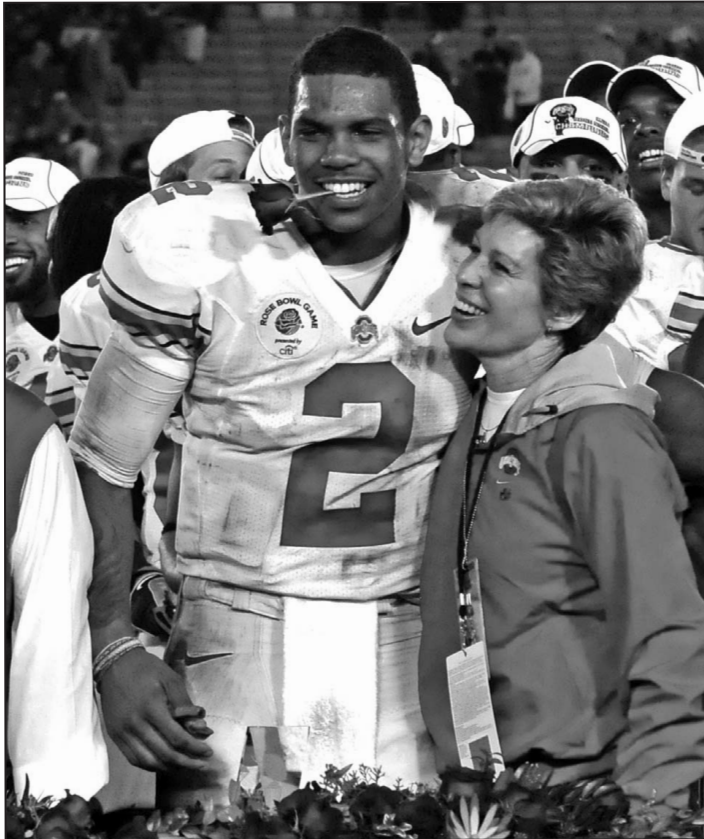
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**COVER STORY: PRYOR, BUCKEYES BLOOM IN ROSE BOWL**



SONNY BROCKWAY

**ALL SMILES** – Sophomore quarterback Terrelle Pryor (2) and Ellen Tressel (right), wife of Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel, celebrate the Buckeyes' victory in the Rose Bowl. Pryor ended the first half of his collegiate career with an impressive performance.

was asked several times, 'Oregon's defense is so fast. How are you going to be able to slow them down?' Well, when people keep telling you how bad you are, there are two things you do. You can believe it or you can get pissed off and do something about it. That kind of stuff fired us up and we decided to do something about it."

To flip the script, then, with a victory was a delight for the Ohio State players.

"It's definitely the greatest feeling you can imagine," senior offensive lineman Jim Cordle said. "Just to get everything off our back and to go out as a Rose Bowl champion is unbelievable. This is my last game and I had a great memory of Ohio State. We had a great career but this really puts a stamp on the career. I'll always remember this feeling."

Many of the team's veteran players talked in the lead-up to the Rose Bowl about how important winning the game would be to put the Ohio State name back on the map and silence some doubters. To do so, the Buckeyes knew they simply had to play their game rather than do anything special.

"I've been saying all along that we're good enough and we can compete with anybody in the nation," senior safety and team co-captain Kurt Coleman said. "There are some games we just didn't execute, and I think you can go back to national championship games when we just didn't execute well enough. Today we played our best ball, I think, throughout the whole year."

As a result, the senior class was able to go out on a high note. Ohio State's 2009 group wasn't the most experienced, but the senior group did feature a number of starters and contributors who gave their time, sweat and blood to the cause for four or five years.

All will certainly look back at the ending of the Rose Bowl as one of the highest points in their college careers, but it may have been more special for the two seniors on the offensive side of the ball. As the clocked ticked down and the Ohio State fans in attendance went nuts, Ballard and Cordle were on the field taking part in the drive that sealed the deal.

"I was just savoring the moment – just taking it all in," Cordle said. "I was playing each play as hard as I could because I told Jake Ballard in the huddle, 'This is our last college drive. Let's do it, man. Just save every moment.' It was great."



Jim Cordle

**Springboard Into New Year**

No matter what happened in the Rose Bowl, the Buckeyes were going to be among the best teams in the country and considered a national title contender for the 2010 season.

Winning the game was a good way to cement that status, though, and it wouldn't be a stretch to see Ohio State pick up where it left off the '09 season as a top-five squad – OSU finished fifth in the major polls after the bowl season – when September rolls around.

Defending national champion Alabama, which returns Heisman Trophy winner Mark Ingram and quarterback Greg McElroy, should start at No. 1 and as the odds-on favorite to return to the national title game at the Fiesta Bowl site in Glendale, Ariz. The Buckeyes will be among a bevy of teams – including Oregon – expected to give the Crimson Tide a run for their money.

"They are really going to be something," Worthington said of the 2010 Buckeyes. "I wish I was coming back because they're really going to be good. It's going to be fun watching them."

Of course, Pryor will lead the charge on offense with every major skill position contributor also back along with four starters on the offensive line. On the defense, seniors Worthington, Coleman, Spitzer, safety Anderson Russell and tackle Todd Denlinger started at least six games, but such standouts as lineman Cameron Heyward, linebackers Ross Homan and Brian Rolle and cornerback Chimdi Chekwa are set for a return.

Those players will get a head start on the '10 campaign thanks to the bowl win. Before the Rose Bowl, many players said that the

last three bowl losses left the program in a funk going into offseason workouts and spring practice, but this unit will hope to mimic the 2005 squad that won its final seven games before competing for a national championship the next year.

"It's really big for us," Posey said. "It's momentum into 2010. We're looking forward to the offseason and we're looking forward to working. It's definitely big."

Sophomore defensive end Nathan Williams, speaking about a defense that should still be loaded despite all of its losses, was slightly more excited.

"I can't wait to get started," he said. "The way we played tonight, I wish the season began tomorrow."

Instead, Williams and his teammates will have to wait 245 days from New Year's Day to get a crack at Marshall on Sept. 4, the next step on what they hope is a journey that will take them from Disneyland back to the Arizona desert and their next date with destiny.

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## OHIO STATE VS. OREGON

## Perfect Ending In Pasadena: OSU Rolls

By MARK REA

Buckeye Sports Bulletin Managing Editor

Ohio State executed an almost flawless game plan on both offense and defense and in the process scored a 26-17 victory over seventh-ranked Oregon in the 96th edition of the Rose Bowl.

The Ducks admittedly spent much of their bowl practice time gearing up to stop the OSU running game, but the seventh-ranked Buckeyes broke from the gate with a 10-play, 74-yard touchdown march that featured eight passes. A ninth was called but wound up a 24-yard, third-down scramble by sophomore quarterback Terrelle Pryor.

After the offense gave the Buckeyes a quick 7-0 advantage, the OSU defense went to work and set its own tempo. On the Ducks' third play from scrimmage, junior tackle Cameron Heyward shot through a gap to sack Oregon quarterback Jeremiah Masoli and dump him for a 9-yard loss.

It was all part of a dominating first-quarter performance by the Buckeyes on both sides of the ball.

Following the game, first-year Oregon head coach Chip Kelly admitted his defense was caught off guard by an OSU game plan that resulted in 38 passes after the Buckeyes had averaged only 17 throws in their final three regular-season games.

"It was surprising to us (after) watching their last couple of games where they didn't throw it very much and were rather conservative," Kelly said. "They came in and opened it up, and obviously Terrelle beat us."

Pryor was named the game's offensive MVP after a performance that included 23 completions in 37 attempts for 266 yards and two touchdowns. The completions, attempts and yardage were single-game career highs for the sophomore QB, and he added a game-high 72 yards rushing despite playing with a partially torn ligament in the back of his left knee.

"It was bothering me," Pryor said of the injury, "but I was just trying to hide it a little bit and trying to ignore it. It hurt (but) that didn't matter. We just wanted to send these seniors out with a win."

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Oregon's defense simply had no answer for the Buckeyes, especially in crucial situations. OSU converted 11 of 21 third downs and held the ball for a Rose Bowl-record 41 minutes and 37 seconds. Time of possession had been a concern for the Ducks all season, but their quick-strike offense had usually been able to alleviate that problem.

"Time of possession I was not worried about," Kelly said. "I was worried about Terrelle Pryor. When I saw him in high school, he was a man among boys, and at times tonight he looked like a man among boys."

Helping Pryor to his career-best passing performance were receivers Dane Sanzenbacher and DeVier Posey, who combined to catch 17 balls. Sanzenbacher had a career-high nine catches for 64 yards while Posey grabbed eight receptions for 101 yards that included a touchdown midway through the fourth quarter that iced the victory.

In addition to Pryor having a hot hand in the passing game, the Buckeyes used the tailback tandem of junior Brandon Saine and sophomore Dan "Boom" Herron to control the game's tempo in the second half. Each player had 14 carries, and Saine finished with 45 yards while Herron had 42. Each also was a contributor in the passing attack — Herron caught three balls for 18 yards and Saine had two catches for 59 yards and a touchdown.

While the Buckeyes were racking up 419 yards of offense, the defense was holding Oregon to only 260, its second-lowest total of the season. The Ducks' 81 passing yards were a season low.

"They did a great job of taking (Masoli) away and not letting him run a lot of our read stuff," Kelly said. "They had a guy assigned to our quarterback, so he had to hand the ball off. Part of trying to defend us is you have to take something away, and they tried to take away the quarterback."

Tried and succeeded.

Masoli was the season-long catalyst for Oregon's high-powered offense, entering the game averaging slightly more than 227 yards of total offense per outing. The Buckeyes held him to only 90 — 81 through the air on 9-of-20 passing and 9 rushing on six carries.

"He was their main guy and we knew we needed to focus on him," Heyward said. "They have a lot of talent, but Masoli is the guy who makes it all go. We knew if we could contain him, we had a good chance to win."

Despite Masoli's subpar performance, the Ducks were able to gain some yardage on the ground against Ohio State. Redshirt freshman tailback LaMichael James had a team-high 70 yards on 15 carries and earned praise from OSU defenders for his hard-nosed ability. But James entered the game averaging 123.0 yards per game, and



SONNY BROCKWAY

**CLUTCH CATCH** — Senior tight end Jake Ballard (86) made only one reception in the 2010 Rose Bowl, but it was an important one. His fourth-quarter grab on a third-down play set up an eventual victory-sealing touchdown in Ohio State's 26-17 Rose Bowl win over Pac-10 champion Oregon.

The Buckeyes ended his personal mark of consecutive 100-yard games at seven.

Backup Kenjon Barner, another redshirt freshman, added 64 yards on seven carries, but 37 of those came on one late first-quarter breakaway. Meanwhile, senior LeGarrette Blount chipped in with 36 yards and a touchdown, but he lost a critical red-zone fumble in the third quarter when his team appeared poised to take the lead.

Barner added another 122 yards on four kickoff returns, giving his team excellent starting field position on a number of occasions. Almost every time, however, the Ohio State defense turned away the Ducks empty-handed.

"We faced a lot of adversity today — some poor field position after some poor kick coverage and we let them hit a couple of fourth downs on us," OSU defensive

coordinator Jim Heacock said. "Then they got a first down on a pass interference call. All of those things went against us, and still we kept our poise and kept our focus."

"We never got down, the mood on the sideline was always great and everybody was locked in on what we were trying to accomplish."

Junior linebacker Ross Homan turned in a team-high 12 tackles for the Buckeyes, and he added a late second-quarter interception that set up a field goal just before halftime. Senior safety Anderson Russell added six stops — all solos — and nearly had an interception of his own in the first half.

Junior defensive end Thaddeus Gibson was one of three OSU defenders with four tackles in the game, and two of his stops were for loss. Senior safety Kurt Coleman and Heyward also had four tackles, and Heyward had the Buckeyes' lone sack in the game.

Oregon defensive end Kenny Rowe was named the game's most valuable defensive player after a performance that included seven tackles, including four for loss and a Rose Bowl record-tying three sacks.

OU freshman defensive back John Boyett tied Homan for game-high honors with 12 tackles while senior free safety T.J. Ward had 10.

#### Nip And Tuck Battle

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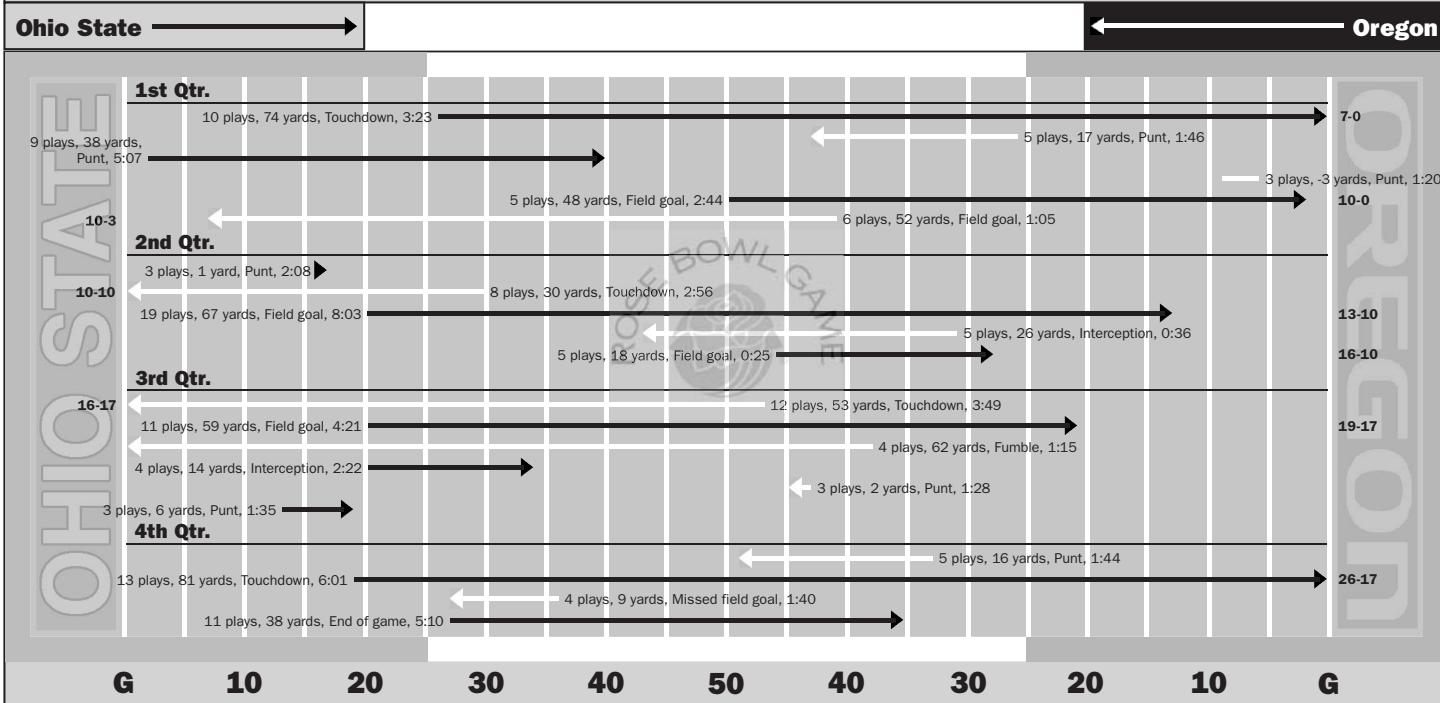
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**OHIO STATE VS. OREGON**

# Rose Bowl Drive Chart



heat up on the Oregon defense and touched off what would be an entertaining, back-and-forth contest.

Pryor misfired on his first throw of the game, a quick dump over the middle to Posey, but the QB came back with a short 4-yard completion to Sanzenbacher. That set up an early third-and-6 at the OSU 30, and the Ducks (10-3) thought they had the Ohio State quarterback corralled. But Pryor rolled out of the pocket to his right and then started upfield. He moved back toward the middle of the field off a block from right guard Bryant Browning and finally was pushed out of bounds on the far sideline, but not before picking up 24 yards and a first down at the Oregon 46.

Pryor followed with a pair of passes to Posey that netted 15 yards and a connection to Sanzenbacher worth another 7. Saine took a handoff on the next play, faked outside and then cut inside for an 11-yard gain to give the Buckeyes a first down at the UO 13.

The drive stalled briefly when Pryor failed to complete first- and second-down throws, but he connected with Saine on a short third-down pass and the OSU tailback did the rest. Saine lowered his shoulder and ran over Oregon cornerback Talmadge Jackson III near the goal line for the 13-yard touchdown.

Senior kicker Aaron Pettrey, coming back from knee surgery, added the PAT and Ohio State was off and running with a 7-0 lead at the 11:37 mark of the first quarter.

"I think that just set the tempo for what we were capable of," Saine said. "It's always a good feeling to take that opening drive and punch it in."

Oregon seemed intent on answering the score when Masoli completed a 10-yard pass to James on the Ducks' first offensive play from scrimmage and then Barner rushed for 13 yards for a first down at the UO 49.

Things went downhill in a hurry after that, though. Heyward stormed in on Masoli to sack him on the next play, and the Ducks eventually were forced to punt their first possession away.

The Buckeyes struck again late in the first quarter, thanks to a sideline pass from Pryor to Saine that caught Oregon in mismatch coverage. Saine circled out of the backfield and drew one-on-one coverage from Rowe, who could not keep up with the OSU tailback. The pass play eventually went for 46 yards and gave the Buckeyes a first-and-goal at the Oregon 4.

Unfortunately, the drive stalled and Ohio State wound up settling for a 19-yard field goal from junior Devin Barclay with 34 seconds left in the opening period.

At that point, the Buckeyes held a 10-0 lead and a 140-14 advantage in total yardage.

But the Quack Attack was far from finished.

Barner returned the ensuing kickoff 28 yards to his own 41 and then broke off that 37-yard run to push the Ducks into Ohio State territory for the first time. One play later, Masoli got loose for a 13-yard gain that pushed Oregon to the OSU 9 before time expired in the first quarter.

The Ducks eventually got to the 7-yard line on third down and appeared to have a shot at a touchdown when receiver Jeff Maehl got open in the end zone. But Coleman came free on a safety blitz and forced Masoli to rush his throw, and Maehl could not come up with a diving catch.

Oregon kicker Morgan Flint came on for a 24-yard field goal, and the Ducks were on the board at 10-3 with 14:24 remaining in the second quarter.

The UO defense forced its first three-and-out against the Ohio State offense, and the Ducks went back to work. Barner's 28-yard punt return gave his team excellent field position at the OSU 30, and a steady diet of James runs pushed Oregon into scoring position again.

This time, the Ducks would not be denied as Blount stretched the football over the goal line from 3 yards out. Flint added the extra point to tie the score at 10 with 9:14 left until halftime.

With their early momentum gone, the Buckeyes endeavored to regain it with the

## The Bottom Line . . .

**It was over when ...** Oregon senior kicker Morgan Flint sailed his 44-yard field-goal attempt wide right with 5:10 remaining in the game. The miss seemed to deflate the comeback-minded Ducks, who never again got possession of the football.

**The game ball goes to ...** Terrelle Pryor. After a season filled with criticism – much of it from Ohio State fans – Pryor turned in a superlative performance against the seventh-ranked Ducks. The sophomore QB set new single-game highs for completions, attempts and passing yardage and accounted for 338 yards of total offense.

**Stat of the game ...** 89. Ohio State ran 89 offensive plays, third most in Rose Bowl history. Oregon ran only 53 plays, and the difference of 36 was the most since Michigan had a 90-24 edge over Stanford in 1902 during the first Rose Bowl game ever played.

– Mark Rea

game's longest drive. Starting at its own 20, OSU held the ball for just more than eight minutes and ran 19 plays, converting three third-down plays and even a fourth-and-1 at the Oregon 14 when Saine bulled his way up the middle behind left guard Justin Boren, tight end Jake Ballard and fullback Zach Boren for 4 yards.

The sustained drive fizzled and the Buckeyes had to settle for another Barclay field goal, this one from 30 yards away. It did, however, put Ohio State back into the lead at 13-10 with 1:05 left in the second quarter.

Oregon hoped to use its quick-strike capability to get something out of those final 65 seconds, and Masoli quickly got his team to near midfield when he completed a 23-yard pass to sophomore wideout Lavasier Tuinei.

But three plays later, Masoli's pass intended for tight end Ed Dickson was deflected by OSU defensive tackle Doug Worthington and wound up in the hands of Homan, who returned the interception 20 yards to the Oregon 46.

With only 19 seconds left, Pryor found Sanzenbacher for an 18-yard gain. That put

Pettrey well within his range, and the senior responded with a 45-yard field goal as time expired to give the Buckeyes a 16-10 halftime lead.

Oregon responded by taking the third-quarter kickoff and marching 53 yards to grab its first lead of the game. Again, Barner set things in motion with a 39-yard kick return to his own 47, and then Masoli engineered a 12-play drive that culminated in a 1-yard touchdown dive by the UO quarterback.

Flint tacked on the PAT and the Ducks enjoyed a 17-16 lead at the 11:03 mark of the third quarter.

The Buckeyes responded with another sustained drive, this one lasting 11 plays and covering 59 yards. The big play in the march was a 36-yard pass from Pryor to Posey that took the ball from the OSU 35 to the Oregon 29. Unfortunately, the Buckeyes again stumbled once they got into the red zone, and Barclay came on for a 38-yard field goal to put his team back into the lead at 19-17 with 6:36 remaining in the third period.

Continued On Page 12

## OHIO STATE VS. OREGON

# Buckeyes Break Bowl Losing Streak

Continued From Page 11

Then came one of the game's major turning points.

Barner once again gave his team excellent starting position by returning the ensuing kickoff 36 yards to his own 38, and two plays later James broke loose for a 30-yard romp to the Ohio State 26.

But two plays after that, Masoli and Blount got crossed up on a simple handoff. The football squirted out of the Oregon tailback's grasp, and then he inadvertently kicked it toward the goal line. OSU defenders Chimdi Chekwa and Nathan Williams gave chase as the loose ball wound up going out of the end zone for a touchback.

Oregon would have possession inside Ohio State territory only once more in the game, and by then it was too late.

OSU got the ball back on a punt early in the fourth quarter and proceeded to put the game away. Again, Pryor was the touchstone for the drive and either ran or threw for 71 of the 81 yards the Buckeyes covered on the 6:01 march.

Three times, Ohio State converted third-down plays, including a third-and-13 that resulted in a spectacular 24-yard reception by Ballard on which he leapt high to take away the football from a pair of Oregon defenders.

The capper to the drive came on a 17-yard touchdown pass to Posey on a fade route, a play Pryor later said he came up with while watching Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning on television. Posey's twisting score was followed by Pettrey's PAT and pushed Ohio State's lead to 26-17 with 7:02 to go in the game.

Oregon refused to give up, and after another excellent kickoff return – this one for 42 yards by freshman Cliff Harris – the Ducks were at the OSU 36. James ran for 5 yards on first down, but Worthington erased that gain on the next play when he corralled the Oregon running back and threw him for a 5-yard loss.

Masoli completed a 9-yard pass to James on third down to set up a fourth-and-1 at the

Ohio State 27. The Ducks had already converted two previous fourth-down attempts, but Kelly elected to send Flint onto the field for a 44-yard field-goal attempt. The strategy backfired, however, when the senior kicker – who was working on a streak of 13 straight three-pointers – sailed his attempt outside the right upright.

Later, Kelly defended his decision to go for the field goal in that situation.

"We're down two scores, so you need a touchdown and a field goal," he said. "It doesn't matter which way you get (them). We needed both and we felt like he could kick it. Morgan is a very good kicker for us, and at that distance we felt confident he was going to put it through."

With 5:10 remaining in the game, Ohio State took over at its own 27 and never relinquished possession. Two more third-down conversions and a 12-yard scramble by Pryor following Oregon's final timeout sealed the 26-17 victory.

## Game Notes

- Ohio State moved its advantage over Oregon to 8-0 in the all-time series. Prior to the Rose Bowl, the teams hadn't met since 1987 when the Buckeyes took a 24-14 win over the Ducks in Ohio Stadium.

- It marked the first meeting between Tressel and Kelly, who completed his first season as head coach of the Ducks. Tressel is now 15-1 during his Ohio State tenure against first-year head coaches. The lone blemish on that slate came earlier this season against Purdue's Danny Hope.

- Tressel upped his lifetime postseason record to 28-10, including 5-4 in bowl games while at Ohio State. He was 23-6 in Division I-AA playoff games while at Youngstown State and won national championships in 1991, '93, '94 and '97.

- In overall meetings, the Buckeyes are now 51-25-2 against teams currently in the Pac-10. In addition to being a perfect 8-0 against Oregon, OSU is 3-1 vs. Arizona, 2-0 vs. Arizona State, 5-1 vs. California, 2-0 vs. Oregon State, 2-3 vs. Stanford, 4-4-1 vs.

UCLA, 9-13-1 vs. USC, 8-3 vs. Washington and 8-0 vs. Washington State.

- Oregon's record fell to 15-27 all-time against the Big Ten. In addition to an 0-8 slate against Ohio State, the Ducks are 2-1 vs. Illinois, 2-1 vs. Indiana, 2-1 vs. Iowa, 2-3 vs. Michigan, 1-3 vs. Minnesota, 2-2 vs. Michigan State, 0-1 vs. Northwestern, 1-3 vs. Penn State, 2-1 vs. Purdue and 1-3 vs. Wisconsin.

- Tressel is now 4-3 all-time against Pac-10 schools. Along with his win over the Ducks, he is 2-0 vs. Washington, 1-0 vs. Washington State, 0-1 vs. UCLA and 0-2 vs. USC.

- Kelly is 1-1 all-time against Big Ten schools. His team earned a 38-36 victory over Purdue at Autzen Stadium in Eugene on Sept. 12.

- The Buckeyes snapped their bowl losing streak at three straight and are now 19-22 overall in the postseason. Oregon had won its two previous bowl games, and the Ducks' overall postseason mark dropped to 9-14 with the loss.

- Ohio State made its fifth consecutive BCS game appearance and eighth overall. Oregon was making its second BCS appearance. The Ducks tallied a 38-16 win over Colorado in the 2002 Fiesta Bowl.

- OSU evened its lifetime Rose Bowl record at 7-7 and is now on a two-game win streak in Pasadena. The Buckeyes knocked off second-ranked Arizona State with a thrilling 20-17 victory in the 1997 Rose Bowl. The program hadn't won back-to-back Rose Bowls since a 10-7 win over Oregon in 1958 and a 27-16 victory over USC in the 1969 game.

- Oregon was making its fifth Rose Bowl appearance and first since 1995. The Ducks are now 1-4 with the team's lone victory coming in 1917 with a 14-0 win over the University of Pennsylvania.

- Despite winning their respective Big Ten and Pac-10 championships outright, neither team seemed to garner much in the way of all-league recognition from their own conference coaches. Ohio State and Oregon had



SONNY BROCKWAY

**BACK OVER .500 – Ohio State head coach Jim Tressel improved his bowl record at Ohio State to 5-4.**

just one player each earn first-team honors on the all-conference teams voted on by coaches. For the Buckeyes, it was defensive back Kurt Coleman, while Oregon's lone representative was tight end Ed Dickson.

- Kelly was named Pac-10 Coach of the Year in his first season heading the Ducks. Tressel has never been voted Big Ten Coach of the Year despite six league championships and one national title in nine seasons.

- Tressel is now 36-13 against ranked opposition during his tenure at Ohio State. Kelly finished his first season with a 4-2 record against top-25 teams.

- Ohio State set a new Rose Bowl time of possession record. The Buckeyes held the ball for 41:37 to only 18:23 for the Ducks.

- The team leading at halftime has now won eight straight Rose Bowls.

- Pryor had 338 yards of total offense in the game, the second-highest total in OSU bowl history. Troy Smith piled up 408 yards in the 2006 Fiesta Bowl win over Notre Dame.

- Pryor had the second-most total yards of any Big Ten quarterback in the Rose Bowl. Steve Schnur of Northwestern had 348 in the 1996 game against USC, a 41-32 win for the Trojans.

- Pryor finished the season with 2,873 total yards, the fourth-best single-season output in OSU history. The top three are Bobby Hoying (3,290, 1995), Joe Germaine (3,247, 1998) and Smith (2,893, 2005).

- Pryor also wound up as the team's leading rusher and passer. The last player to lead the team in both categories in a single season was Don Clark in 1956. That season, Clark rushed for 797 yards and threw for 88.

- U.S. Airways captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger III served as grand marshal of the Tournament of Roses Parade and also performed the coin toss at the beginning of the Rose Bowl. Sullenberger engineered the "Miracle on the Hudson," successfully ditching U.S. Airways Flight 1549 in the Hudson River on Jan. 15, 2009, and saving the lives of all 155 people on board.

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OHIO STATE VS. OREGON

# Silver Bullets Shone One Last Time

As Jim Heacock walked off the Rose Bowl field after Ohio State's 26-17 win against Oregon, the Buckeyes' defensive coordinator made sure to seek out every member of his defense he could find for a high five, a handshake or an embrace.

It's safe to say that those congratulations for each member of the squad were well-deserved.

Ohio State's defense stifled what was supposed to be an unstoppable Oregon offense that entered the game seventh in the nation at 37.7 points per game. The Ducks were held to less than half of their scoring average and more than 164 yards below their yardage average of 424.7.

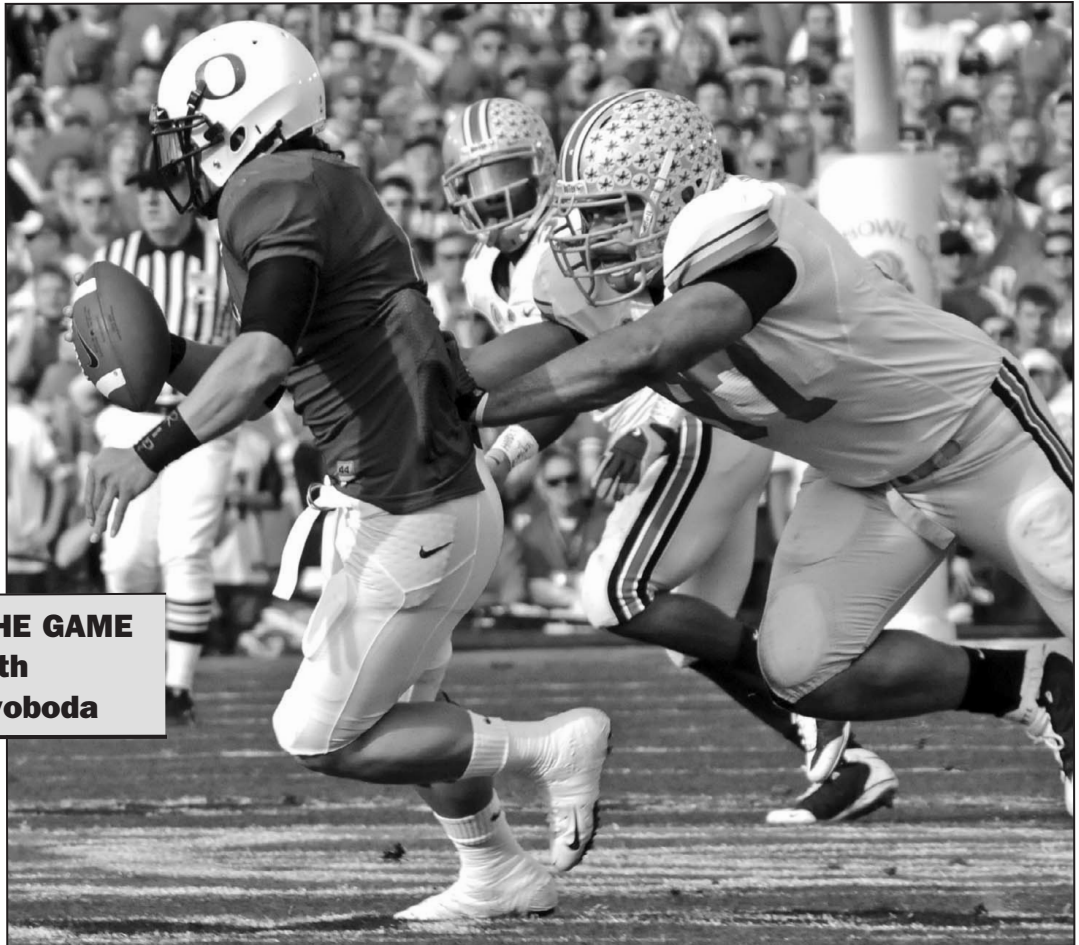
To come up with the plan to slow down a team that had scored 40 or more points in seven of its last nine games, Heacock didn't spend the six weeks between the Michigan game and New Year's Day concocting a fancy new scheme to confuse the Ducks' option attack.

Instead, he simply went with what allowed the Buckeyes to be one of the best defensive teams in the country throughout the season – a simplified, attacking defense that relied on the individual players to make plays.

"We did in this game what we did all year long," Heacock said. "If you look at our game plan against some of the other spread teams we played, it wasn't that different. We just try to do what we do best no matter who we're playing. The thing about this particular team is that they do their best when they know exactly what they're doing. You know, we've tried to put stuff in along the way and it never turned out quite as well as we hoped, so we learned just to stay with the basics."

"This is a team that really excels when it's comfortable with what it's doing. You knew they were always going to play hard for you. That was never in question, so we just tried to put them in the best possible situation for them to excel."

The Buckeyes took to that idea like, well,



SONNY BROCKWAY

**ON THE RUN** – Ohio State junior defensive lineman Cameron Heyward (97), junior linebacker Brian Rolle (36) and the Buckeye defense made things difficult for quarterback Jeremiah Masoli (8) and the rest of the Oregon offense.

ducks to water. The Ohio State stop troops were outstanding throughout the year and

just as outstanding during the Rose Bowl, spending their time in game prep nailing down exactly what Heacock wanted them to do.

The Ducks brought to Pasadena a rush-based option offense that operated at a quick tempo and used deception and misdirection to make its conference opposition in the Pac-10 look foolish. Yet the Buckeyes, who operated entirely out of their nickel package, rarely looked confused during the game, a nod to both the scheme and the amount of work the Ohio State defenders put in figuring out the trends in the Ducks' offense.

"We worked at it," defensive end Thaddeus Gibson said. "All throughout bowl practice, we knew what we were getting ourselves into. We knew that we could take these guys. No disrespect to those guys because I personally think they're the best offense in the country, but the way this defense worked, something good had to come."

The first key to slowing down the Oregon attack was cutting off its head, and that was quarterback Jeremiah Masoli. The hard-running, athletic signal caller operated the Ducks' offense with skill during the regular season, throwing for 187.8 yards per game and rushing for an additional 59.9.

He wouldn't even get close to those marks against the Buckeyes. Masoli never got on track, completing only 9 of 20 passes for 81 yards and an interception while rushing six times for 9 yards and a score. That Ohio State was able to keep Masoli under

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**OHIO STATE VS. OREGON**

such wraps was surprising even to members of the defense, who said they wouldn't have believed the final numbers if they had been told them before the game.

"I'd have probably smelled your breath because I would have wondered what you'd been drinking," senior lineman Doug Worthington said.

To keep Masoli contained, the No. 1 key for Ohio State was to make sure there was a man shadowing him at all times. Heacock said before the game that he might even put two spies on the quarterback – and he did at times – but on most of the Ducks' zone-read or inside running plays there was at least one player shadowing the quarterback in an effort to force him to get rid of the ball.

Responsibilities for staying home on the read plays most often fell to ends Worthington, Gibson and Cameron Heyward, and they were so often in their positions that Masoli even started to hand the ball off on the few occasions in the second half it appeared he had room to maneuver.

"We had to account for him in every defense that we had, but the nice thing is we had some time to prepare for it," Heacock said.

In the passing game, Masoli was constantly under pressure and couldn't get into a rhythm. On his first passing attempt of the game, he faked a handoff only to find Heyward in his face, and the unblocked Buckeye junior quickly corralled the quarterback for a 9-yard loss.

Masoli wasn't sacked again but rarely had time to get comfortable in the pocket or to set his feet and deliver a strike, and the Buckeye secondary blanketed his receivers when he did have time. First-team All-Pac-10 tight end Ed Dickson was kept without a catch, while No. 1 wideout Jeff Maehl made only a single grab.

With Masoli accounted for, the Ducks often tried to hit the edge with big plays on the ground, succeeding a handful of times. In particular, a jet sweep handoff to motioning speedster Kenjon Barner burned the Buckeyes on occasion, but Oregon's bread-and-butter inside running plays such as the counter and the zone read were largely held in check.

Tailback LaMichael James, the Pac-10 Offensive Freshman of the Year, saw his streak of seven straight 100-yard games come to an end when he finished with 70 yards rushing on 15 carries.

That was thanks in part to the performances of the players in the middle of the OSU defense, especially linebacker Ross Homan. The junior had eight solo tackles and a team-high 12 total stops while actively tracking the Oregon backs all game long. Safeties Anderson Russell and Kurt Coleman combined for 10 solo tackles, while linebacker Brian Rolle added three.

"For us, it was playing our assignment football," Coleman said. "We felt like we could run with them from sideline to sideline."

The Buckeyes occasionally blitzed a cornerback or nickel back Jermale Hines, but the Ohio State defensive line was responsible for the brunt of the pressure on plays that didn't work for the Ducks. Gibson led the team with two tackles for loss while Heyward and Worthington each had one.

An example of the excellent play up front compiled by Ohio State came moments before the Ducks missed a crucial 44-yard field goal with 5:10 to play that sealed the game in favor of the Scarlet and Gray. Both Heyward and Worthington came through the Ducks' line, with Worthington shaking off a block and then hitting James for a 5-yard loss.

"They just played hard like they have all year," Heacock said of his line. "They just kept playing, kept battling. They're good."

When the dust settled, the Ducks offense had been kept off the field for the most part, with only 53 plays and an 18:23 time of possession. Oregon finished with 260 yards of offense, its second-lowest output of the season, and 12 first downs, a season-low total OSU head coach Jim Tressel deemed incredible.

That wouldn't have been much of a problem for the Ducks, who pride themselves on scoring quickly, if they had hit the big plays that had been the engine of the team's offense. In the regular season, Oregon averaged six plays of 20 yards or more per game, and 70 percent of the team's scoring drives included at least one of those big-gainers.

In the Rose Bowl, however, Oregon had only three plays of 20-plus yards, and just one of them – a 37-yard sweep by Barner late in the first quarter – led to points.

"It was critical," Heacock said. "You have to limit their big plays. That was the only way we had a chance."

The Buckeye defenders also played their best with their backs against the wall in the second half. Oregon's five second-half drives started at an average of their own 47-yard line, but the Ducks scored only seven points in the half.

"Oh my god, it was just an incredible feeling," Gibson said. "I know you've heard us (talking about) hard work and dedication, but it truly pays off. These guys were ready to go since we found out who we were playing."

keep doing what it had all year, the offensive brain trust went a different direction.

Rather than keep the ball on the ground as it had during a five-game winning streak to end the regular season, OSU came out firing in the Rose Bowl. With the Buckeyes returning to a one-back, three-wideout set to start the game, quarterback Terrelle Pryor threw eight passes – including a 13-yard touchdown to Brandon Saine – on a 10-play scoring drive to open the game on the way to tossing a career-high 37 balls.

The Ducks had spent part of the week leading up to the game telling the assembled media that they weren't too concerned with Pryor's aerial prowess, and they had reason to if one looked at the stats. Pryor threw 17 passes in each of the Buckeyes' final three regular-season games, and he averaged 95.0 yards per game in that trio of contests.

The numbers were so stark that even the sophomore signal caller said he couldn't blame the Ducks for their approach, ticking off his stats in the final games of the year to the media.

"I wouldn't be worried about (our passing game) either," Pryor said. "Would you? I wouldn't."

By the end of the Rose Bowl, however, that proved to be a moot point as Pryor completed 23 of his 37 passes for 266 yards, the most for an Ohio State quarterback since Troy Smith threw for 316 against Michigan while sewing up the Heisman Trophy in 2006.

Pryor added two touchdowns and an interception while showing a good pocket presence that allowed him to hit Saine – his last option – out of the backfield on his touchdown grab.

**Revolving Around Pryor**

While the Ohio State defense decided to

Continued On Page 16

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OHIO STATE VS. OREGON

# Ohio State's Offense Fared Well

Continued From Page 15

"Well, the plan was to make him throw the ball, but when he threw it that good, the plan didn't go well," said Oregon defensive end Kenny Rowe, the game's defensive MVP.

As was once thought to be typical of a Tressel-coached team in a big game, the Buckeyes added several successful wrinkles on offense. For example, Pryor started the team's third drive of the day lined up in the shotgun with Saine and fullback Zach Boren next to him on either side, while both wide receivers and tight end Jake Ballard were lined up to the left of the formation.

Pryor was under pressure after receiving the snap but was able to step up and loft a ball down the right sideline, where Saine had leaked out of the backfield on a wheel route. He easily got behind Rowe and made a 46-yard catch along the sideline, putting the ball at the Oregon 4-yard line and leading to a field goal that made the score 10-0.

The play was similar to one called in the 2008 BCS National Championship Game against LSU when Saine snagged a 44-yard grab.

"It worked today," the OSU tailback said. "The coaches said it would, and Terrelle put a great pass up there for me."

Pryor also got two chances to connect with his favorite target all season, classmate DeVier Posey, on a rarely seen back-shoulder fade route he said he picked up from watching Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning. Posey dropped the initial try in the corner of the end zone on the first drive of the game, but he took his chance to redeem himself and ran with it, making a twisting catch in the same corner for a 17-yard scoring grab that set the final score at 26-17 with 7:02 to go.

"It was the same exact play, and it was redemption," Posey said. "A bunch of guys were coming up to me telling me it's going to swing back, and I just wanted to relax and be ready for the time it was going to come."

Posey wound up with a game-high 101 yards receiving on eight grabs, while accom-



SONNY BROCKWAY

**HOLDING THE LINE** – Ohio State's offensive line, which included junior Justin Boren (65) and senior Jim Cordle (right), fared well against the Oregon defense. That allowed sophomore quarterback Terrelle Pryor (2) to find success moving the offense down the field.

plice Dane Sanzenbacher made a career-high nine catches for 64 yards. The junior from Toledo spent much of the game lining up as a slot receiver, catching a variety of quick bubble screens and slant patterns that helped keep the chains moving.

The 17 combined catches for Posey and Sanzenbacher were the most for a Buckeye duo since Dee Miller and David Boston combined for 20 against Indiana in 1998.

"I've got to say I wouldn't have been able to guess that we would have nine and eight catches," Sanzenbacher said, "but I think it goes to show the chemistry that we built through the season. I think that we knew as a passing offense that we could do something like this, but we weren't able to put it together in a game yet. To end the season like that, it's a big step."

Third wideout Taurian Washington, who earned the start thanks to suspensions to senior Ray Small and freshman Duron Carter, worked as a capable blocker despite not making a catch. Tight end Jake Ballard

had one snag for 24 yards, but it proved critical when it came on a third-and-13 play during the fourth-quarter scoring drive that put away the Ducks. The 6-6 Ballard leaped high between two defenders to snag Pryor's desperation pass along the right sideline.

Pryor was sacked four times – three by Rowe – but on the whole the Buckeye offensive line did well against an Oregon team that alternated heavy blitzes with zone looks in which they would rush three or even two men with a player spying Pryor.

"It's crazy how well (the line) did," Pryor said.

When it came to running the ball, Ohio State still used plenty of I-formation sets, and Boren also saw time in OSU's two-back, shotgun look that was used extensively.

The Buckeyes weren't able to push a smallish Oregon front down the field, as the Ducks loaded the box with eight and sometimes nine men when Ohio State went to its power looks. Tailbacks Saine and Dan Herron combined for 28 rushes for 87 yards – an average of 3.1 yards per try.

However, the rushing game worked when it had to. For example, the Buckeyes converted a number of short-yardage tries, including a fourth-and-1 deep in Oregon's territory on a drive that led to a field goal late in the first half. OSU also ran itself out of a hole when pinned at its own 2 to start its second drive of the game, and the Buckeyes killed the clock with their power look during the final five minutes of the contest.

"It definitely felt good," Saine said. "To be able to keep possession and keep that clock rolling – especially on that last drive – was huge for us."

Pryor added a game-high 20 carries for 72 yards. His 24-yard scramble on the opening third down of the game set the tone, and Pryor capped the day with crucial runs of 7 and 12 yards on the final drive that put the Ducks away.

Still, the 2010 Rose Bowl will be known as the game Pryor showed the nation what he could do throwing the football, and the quarterback said afterward he hopes to have many similar showings in the future.

"You saw what happened today," Pryor said. "They had to start worrying about (the passing game). I hope everyone thinks like that (and) maybe I'll have more games like this."

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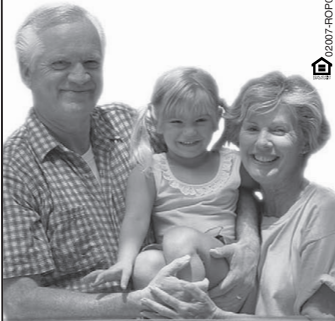
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## OHIO STATE VS. OREGON

## BSB Quotebook: Ohio State 26, Oregon 17

**OSU head coach Jim Tressel on the victory:** "I'm so proud of this group, especially our seniors who took over a young team in August and had high expectations and had some tough moments. ... I'm so proud of them. I'm proud of the coaching staff, our fans showed up a long way from home and it was just a great night for the Buckeyes."

**Oregon head coach Chip Kelly when asked if some of his team's problems were due to a four-week layoff after the regular season:** "No. Those are excuses and we don't use them."

**OSU sophomore quarterback Terrelle Pryor on his performance that earned game offensive MVP honors:** "Really, for myself, probably the sky is the limit (but) I can't do anything without (my teammates). ... We had some drives today, about 15 plays, 20-something plays, and if we keep on moving like that, I'll be successful. Everyone on the team will be successful. It's not really about me. I'm just thankful to have the teammates I have."

**OSU senior defensive tackle Doug Worthington on Pryor's performance:** "He had a great week of practice while we were out here, and it didn't come as a surprise to anyone on this team that he had a great game. He has really taken over as a leader. He pats his guys on the back when they need it, he gets after his offensive line when he needs to – all of the things you need to be if you're going to lead a team. I know he's only going to get better. He's already got my vote next year for the Heisman. All week, you heard about (Oregon quarterback Jeremiah) Masoli and how good he was, but it was good to see my guy performing well and the way we all knew he could. I'll bet from now on you'll start hearing about Terrelle and how good he is."

**Oregon junior defensive end Kenny Rowe on the same subject:** "He made a lot of plays. Our plan was to make him pass the ball and he did that pretty well today. They had third-and-long a few times and he got out of it. He slipped away a couple times. He runs pretty hard and he's got a good stiff-arm too."

**OSU junior defensive end Thaddeus Gibson on the defensive game plan:** "With Oregon being that great of an offense, we knew we just had to keep our poise and play our game. Not play their game, play our game. We just needed to stay focused, take things one play at a time, stay on the tasks at hand and play fundamental football. It was a simple game plan, but it was a good one and that's just what we did."

**OSU sophomore defensive end Nathan Williams on his team's defensive effort:** "To hold that offense, that productive of an offense, to 17 points, man, what can I say? We did a helluva job all game. We really had some bad field position at times because of some breakdowns in the kick coverage – which I know we've got to work on – but we did what we had to do when we had to do it. Seventeen points to that team? I think that speaks for itself."

**OSU junior defensive lineman Cameron Heyward on the win:** "We just wanted this one so bad. When you saw guys running to the football and making plays, they just weren't going to let this one go. We got a contribution from everybody on this team. Everybody. We went into this game with the mentality that we were going to win this game as a team, and that's exactly what we did."

**Masoli on his team's offensive struggles:** "They did eat up the clock a lot, and we did lose a little momentum here and there just chilling on the sideline. But you can only use momentum as an excuse so many times. When you're out there as an offense, you just have to get it going no matter what happens."

**Heyward on his first-quarter sack of Masoli:** "It might have set the tempo for us a little bit. When you get a sack early like that, it tends to set the mood. It sets the tempo for your side. Guys really feed off

those things and it just makes you want to get after the offense just that much more."

**OSU defensive coordinator Jim Heacock on holding Masoli to only 90 yards of total offense:** "Is that all he had? I didn't even know that. Well, there you go. They have such a potent offense that if you hold him down, you've got a chance."

**Gibson on the same subject:** "That's the sign of a pretty good defense. Like I said, we work hard and we're dedicated to be the best we can be. Not to be cocky or anything, but we're pretty good, too. I give all the credit to the coaches because they're the ones that put in all the long hours and come up with the great game plans."

**Williams on holding down Masoli:** "I thought we'd play the kind of game we did, but I was still surprised about him. I don't know how many carries he had, but I thought he'd run a lot more. But we were prepared for him to run and maybe that's why he didn't. Every time it looked like he might take off, we had the guys right there in his face. We practiced the whole time on making sure we didn't overpursue when he had the ball and that really seemed to keep him in check."

**Oregon junior receiver Jeff Maehl on his team's offensive struggles:** "Our offense is so high-powered and we can explode at any time (but) they did a great job of keeping the ball away from us. That's something that teams do when they play us – try to limit us to as few possessions as they can. When you keep us off the field, it makes it tough for us."

**Oregon redshirt freshman tailback LaMichael James on the Buckeyes' defense:** "They didn't let me get started. Their defensive linemen and linebackers were great. We knew they were strong and we knew they were big and they just did a great job tonight. ... They didn't give me many gaps."

**Worthington on dropping James for a 5-yard loss two plays before Oregon missed a fourth-quarter field-goal try:** "That felt great. It was kind of a flashback to Iowa, making a big play when we needed it. It was a great call, and I knew I just needed to get down there, shoot that gap and make the tackle. James is a great back and he almost got away, but thanks to these long arms here I was able to bring him down."

**OSU junior linebacker Ross Homan on Oregon's decision to go for a field goal on fourth-and-1 in the fourth quarter:** "I was kind of surprised. I thought maybe they would go for it because they'd gone for it on fourth down a couple of other times during the game. But maybe they thought some points were better than none at that point in the game. When they missed it, though, you could really see the wind go out of their sails."

**OSU senior offensive tackle Jim Cordle on how a touchdown on the Buckeyes' first offensive series set the game's tempo:** "After that drive we knew our offense was better than their defense."

**OSU junior tailback Brandon Saine on his 46-yard reception that set up a first-quarter field goal:** "It was just a wheel (route) we thought we could catch them on with the coverage they were playing. They wound up with a defensive lineman playing man coverage on me, and Terrelle just laid it in there."

**OSU senior tight end Jake Ballard on his leaping fourth-quarter catch:** "I was lucky enough to be in the right spot. When the ball was in the air, I knew I had to go up and make a play on it. I had the check-down (block), but my guy didn't come (on the rush) so I just drifted out in the flat. Terrelle started scrambling around, and I just went downfield and tried to get open."

**Homan on his late first-half interception:** "In those situations, you just go on instinct. It was a great



SONNY BROCKWAY

**BIG PLAY – Junior linebacker Ross Homan (51) made a key interception late in the second quarter that led to a field goal.**

tip by Doug Worthington and I just tried to make a play on the football. My running back skills were a little rusty on the return, but I tried to make as many yards as I could."

**OSU sophomore tailback Dan "Boom" Herron on Oregon's defense:** "They do a great job of getting to the football. We saw that on film and we saw it again today. But our offense was up to the challenge. I give all the credit to our offensive line. Everyone played their part and that's how we won."

**OSU sophomore center Michael Brewster on the improvement of the offensive line during the season:** "I think we've come a long way. A lot of people doubted us and we had a lot of turnover at a couple of positions during the season, but here at the end we really came together. We lose Jimmy (Cordle) next year and we're really going to miss him, but I think we've got a great group coming back and we're only going to keep getting better."

**Worthington on winning his final game in scarlet and gray:** "There's nothing like it. I think of guys like Larry Grant, Troy Smith, James (Laurinaitis) – all those guys went out with losses and it was heartbreaking. I just feel blessed – truly blessed – that we were able to go with a W."

**Saine on the postgame celebration:** "It was amazing being out there on the field after the game. I guess I didn't think about what it would be like to win a bowl game, but as the game went on and momentum was in our favor, it was a feeling like you really can't describe. Then it's over and all the people rushing the field and the confetti and the trophy – it's just hard to put into words."

**Heacock when asked to rank this year's defense with some others he's had:** "Oh, I can't do that. That's like asking me which one of my kids I like the best. The thing about this team I will say is that it has really bought into the team concept. We said pretty early on that it was a no-name group without a bunch of stars who were going to be up for national honors or getting their names mentioned on national television a lot. But they really played hard. Maybe prepared hard would be an even better description. They prepared like crazy for every game and never got caught up in the hype or what else was going on around them. They just got ready to play, and today's game was a perfect example of that."

**Gibson on if the win gets the big-game monkey off OSU's back:** "You know, it was just about that time we won one of these. We are a great program and no one should ever forget that. But after you lose a couple of games, you just have to remind people. You have to put up or shut up. Today, we put up."

# The Numbers Game

## Ohio State 26, Oregon 17

Jan. 1, 2010 — Rose Bowl; Pasadena, Calif.

Score by Quarters	1	2	3	4	F
OHIO STATE	10	6	3	7	26
OREGON	0	10	7	0	17

### First Quarter

**OSU** — Saine, 13 yard pass from Pryor (Pettrey kick), 11:37; 10 plays, 74 yards, 3:23 TOP.

**OSU** — Barclay, 19 yard field goal, 0:34; 5 plays, 48 yards, 2:44 TOP.

### Second Quarter

**UO** — Flint, 24 yard field goal, 14:24; 6 plays, 52 yards, 1:05 TOP.

**UO** — Blount, 3 yard run (Flint kick), 9:14; 8 plays, 30 yards, 2:56 TOP.

**OSU** — Barclay, 30 yard field goal, 1:05; 19 plays, 67 yards, 8:03 TOP.

**OSU** — Pettrey, 45 yard field goal, 0:00; 5 plays, 18 yards, 0:25 TOP.

### Third Quarter

**UO** — Masoli, 1 yard run (Flint kick), 11:03; 12 plays, 53 yards, 3:49 TOP.

**OSU** — Barclay, 38 yard field goal, 6:36; 11 plays, 59 yards, 4:21 TOP.

### Fourth Quarter

**OSU** — Posey, 17 yard pass from Pryor (Pettrey kick), 7:02; 13 plays, 81 yards, 6:01 TOP.

**Att.** — 93,963.

**Weather** — 71 degrees, sunny; wind, ESE 5 mph.



### Team Statistics

	OSU	UO
<b>First Downs</b>	26	12
<b>Rushing</b>	12	6
<b>Passing</b>	12	5
<b>Penalty</b>	2	1
<b>Rushes-Yards</b>	51-153	33-179
<b>Passing Yards</b>	266	81
<b>Passes (Att.-Comp.-Int.)</b>	38-23-1	20-9-1
<b>Offensive Plays</b>	89	53
<b>Total Net Yards</b>	419	260
<b>Third Down Efficiency</b>	11-21	2-11
<b>Fourth Down Efficiency</b>	1-1	2-2
<b>Punts-Avg.</b>	3-43.7	4-43.2
<b>Fumbles-Lost</b>	1-0	1-1
<b>Penalties</b>	5-39	7-59
<b>Time of Possession</b>	41:37	18:23

### Individual Statistics

**RUSHING (Att.-Net Yds.)** — **OSU:** Pryor 20-72; Saine 14-45; Herron 14-42; TEAM 3-(6). **UO:** James 15-70; Barner 7-64; Blount 5-36; Masoli 6-9.

**PASSING (Comp.-Att.-Int.-Yds.-TD)** — **OSU:** Pryor 23-37-1-266-2; TEAM 0-1-0-0-0. **UO:** Masoli 9-20-1-81-0.

**RECEIVING (Rec.-Yds.)** — **OSU:** Sanzenbacher 9-64; Posey 8-101; Herron 3-18; Saine 2-59; Ballard 1-24. **UO:** James 4-25; Tuinei 2-30; Barner 1-13; Maehl 1-10; Davis 1-3.

**PUNTING (No.-Avg.-Long)** — **OSU:** Thoma 3-43.7-48. **UO:** Rice 4-43.2-55.

**PUNT RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** — **OSU:** Posey 2-0. **UO:** Barner 1-28.

**KICKOFF RETURNS (No.-Yds.)** — **OSU:** Herron 2-44; Saine 1-16; Russell 1-(2). **UO:** Barner 4-122, Harris 2-49.

**FUMBLE RECOVERIES (No.-Yds)** — **OSU:** TEAM 1-0. **UO:** None.

**INTERCEPTIONS (No.-Yds.)** — **OSU:** R.Homan 1-20. **UO:** Boyett 1-5.

**SACKS** — **OSU:** Heyward 1-0-9. **UO:** Rowe 3-0-18; Paysinger 0-5-1; Matthews 0-5-0.

**TACKLES FOR LOSS (No.-Yds.)** — **OSU:** Gibson 2-0-4; Heyward 1-0-9; Worthington 1-0-5. **UO:** Rowe 4-0-20; Paysinger 1-5-3; Boyett 1-0-3; Pleasant 1-0-3; Bair 1-0-3; Clay 1-0-1; Matthews 0-5-0.

**TACKLES (Solo-Asst-Tot.)** — **OSU:** R.Homan 8-4-12; Russell 6-0-6; Gibson 4-0-4; Coleman 4-0-4; Heyward 3-1-4; Rolle 3-0-3; Worthington 2-0-2; Barclay 2-0-2; Torrence 2-0-2; Larimore 2-0-2; Denlinger 1-1-2; Wilson 0-2-2; Saine 1-0-1; O.Johnson 1-0-1; Hines 1-0-1; Herron 1-0-1; N.Williams 0-1-1; Simon 0-1-1. **UO:** Boyett 10-2-12; Ward 6-4-10; Paysinger 7-2-9; Matthews 5-4-9; Rowe 5-2-7; M.Johnson 4-1-5; Pleasant 4-0-4; Ferras 3-1-4; Jackson 2-2-4; Harris 3-0-3; Bair 2-0-2; Gildon 2-0-2; Turner 1-1-2; Clay 1-1-2; Barner 1-0-1; Alonso 1-0-1; Lewis 1-0-1; Toeaina 1-0-1; Butterfield 1-0-1; Holmes 1-0-1; Tukuafu 0-1-1; Clark 0-1-1.

**PLAYERS IN THE GAME** — **OHIO STATE:** Offense, Pryor, Washington, Saine, Ballard, Sanzenbacher, Posey, Cordle, J.Boren, Brewster, Browning, Shugarts, Pettrey, Defense, Gibson, Worthington, Larimore, Heyward, R.Homan, Rolle, Hines, Chekwa, Russell, Coleman, Torrence, Thoma, Reserves, Thomas, Schwartz, Herron, Barclay, Rice, Sabino, Stoneburner, Oliver, Schuck, Howard, O.Johnson, Evege, Klein, Spitzer, N.Williams, Z.Boren, A.Homan, Simon, Newsome, Moses, Adams, C.Smith, Hall, Wilson, Fragel, Denlinger, McQuaide. **OREGON:** Offense, Davis, Thran, York, Holmes, Asper, Kaiser, Dickson, Maehl, Tuinei, Masoli, James, Flint, Defense, Tukuafu, Bair, Ferras, Rowe, Pleasant, Matthews, Paysinger, Gildon, Ward, Boyett, Jackson, Rice, Reserves, Butterfield, M.Johnson, Harris, Palmer, Forer, Costa, Blount, Lewis, Barner, Grady, Irvin, Paulson, Littlejohn, Turner, Clay, Alonso, Rice, Toeaina, Showalter, Cody, Weems, Cavaille, Jordan, Embry, DiVincenzo, Beard, Clark.

## Season Statistics

### 2009-10 Game-By-Game

Date	Opponent	Result/Time	Crowd
Sept. 5 (6)	NAVY	W, 31-27	105,092
Sept. 12 (8)	USC (3)	L, 18-15	106,033
Sept. 19 (11)	Toledo**	W, 38-0	71,727
Sept. 26 (13)	ILLINOIS	W, 30-0	105,219
Oct. 3 (9)	at Indiana	W, 33-14	51,500
Oct. 10 (9)	WISCONSIN	W, 31-13	105,301
Oct. 17 (7)	at Purdue	L, 26-18	50,404
Oct. 24 (18)	MINNESOTA	W, 38-7	105,011
Oct. 31 (17)	N. MEX. STATE	W, 45-0	104,719
Nov. 7 (15)	at Penn State (11)	W, 24-7	110,033
Nov. 14 (10)	IOWA (15)	W, 27-24 (OT)	105,455
Nov. 21 (9)	at Michigan	W, 21-10	110,922
Jan. 1 (8)	Oregon^ (7)	W, 26-17	93,963

\* OSU's gameday AP ranking is in parentheses before the opponent, while the opponent's ranking is after the name.

\*\* At Cleveland ^ Rose Bowl

### Team Statistics

	OSU	Opp
First Downs	250	189
Rushing	142	70
Passing	92	109
Penalty	16	10
Average Per Game/Rush	195.4	90.8
Average Per Game/Pass	173.6	171.5
Total Offense	4,797	3,410
Total Plays	879	827
Average Per Game	369.0	262.3
Average Per Play	5.5	4.1
Penalties-Yards	71-561	67-581
Fumbles-Lost	18-7	24-11
3rd Down Efficiency	81-193	58-188
Percentage	42%	31%
4th Down Efficiency	4-9	11-18
Percentage	44%	61%
Sacks-Yards	30-198	24-186
Time of Possession Avg.	31:31	28:29

### Score

By Quarters	1	2	3	4	OT	Tot.	Avg.
Ohio State	82	115	93	84	3	377	29.0
Opponents	20	46	45	52	0	163	12.5

### Individual Statistics

Rushing	Att.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
Terrelle Pryor	162	779	4.8	7	43
Brandon Saine	145	739	5.1	4	49
Dan Herron	153	600	3.9	7	53
Jordan Hall	48	248	5.2	1	39
Jermil Martin	11	84	7.6	1	39
Joe Bauserman	9	10	1.1	0	7
K.C. Christian	5	14	2.8	0	8
Ray Small	4	40	10.0	0	23
Joe Gantz	4	6	1.5	0	4
Bo DeLande	3	5	1.7	0	4
DeVier Posey	2	19	9.5	0	12
D.Sanzenbacher	2	8	4.0	0	4
Lamaar Thomas	1	6	6.0	0	6
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>563</b>	<b>2,540</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>1,180</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>37</b>

### Passing

	Comp.	Att.	Pct.	Yds.	TD-INT	Effic.
T. Pryor	167	295	56.6	2,094	18-11	128.9
Joe Bauserman	6	19	31.6	124	0-0	86.4
DeVier Posey	1	1,100.0	39	1-0	757.6	
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>55.1</b>	<b>2,257</b>	<b>19-11</b>	<b>127.9</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>54.2</b>	<b>2,230</b>	<b>10-24</b>	<b>95.5</b>

### Receiving

	Rec.	Net	Avg.	TD	Long
DeVier Posey	60	828	13.8	8	62
D. Sanzenbacher	36	570	15.8	6	76
Brandon Saine	17	224	13.2	2	46
Ray Small	15	175	11.7	0	38
Jake Ballard	14	150	10.7	0	24
Duron Carter	13	176	13.5	1	40
Dan Herron	11	66	6.0	1	19
Zach Boren	4	23	5.8	1	8
Jake Stoneburner	2	30	15.0	0	17
Lamaar Thomas	1	10	10.0	0	10
Jordan Hall	1	5	5.0	0	5
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>1,991</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>2,149</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>85</b>

### Scoring

	TD	EPK	EPR	EPP	FG	PTS
Aaron Pettrey	0	30-31	—	—	14-20	72
Dan Herron	8	—	—	—	—	48
DeVier Posey	8	—	—	—	—	48
Terrelle Pryor	7	—	1-1	—	—	44
D. Sanzenbacher	6	—	—	—	—	36
Brandon Saine	6	—	—	—	—	36
Devin Barclay	0	12-12	—	—	7-10	33
Brian Rolle*	1	—	—	—	—	8*
Zach Boren	1	—	—	—	—	6
Duron Carter	1	—	—	—	—	6
Kurt Coleman	1	—	—	—	—	6
Jordan Hall	1	—	—	—	—	6
Cameron Heyward	1	—	—	—	—	6
Jermale Hines	1	—	—	—	—	6
Jermil Martin	1	—	—	—	—	6
Ray Small	1	—	—	—	—	6
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>42-43</b>	<b>1-1</b>	—	<b>21-30</b>	<b>377</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>17-17</b>	—	<b>1</b>	<b>10-17</b>	<b>163</b>

\* Brian Rolle scored two points on an interception return of a Navy two-point conversion attempt.

\*\* Ohio State recorded a team safety vs. USC and Indiana.

### FG Distance

	0-29	30-39	40-49	50+	Total
Aaron Pettrey	6-8	1-3	5-5	2-4	14-20
Devin Barclay	2-2	5-6	0-2	0-0	7-10
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>8-10</b>	<b>6-9</b>	<b>5-7</b>	<b>2-4</b>	<b>21-30</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>3-5</b>	<b>2-3</b>	<b>3-5</b>	<b>2-4</b>	<b>10-16</b>

### Punting

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	Bk	Long
Jon Thoma	58	2,200	37.9	0	55
Ben Buchanan	4	171	42.8	0	51
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>2,371</b>	<b>38.2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>3,486</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>67</b>

### Interceptions

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Kurt Coleman	5	129	25.8	1	89
Ross Homan	5	44	8.8	0	21
Anderson Russell	3	16	5.3	0	16
Jermale Hines	2	48	24.0	1	32
Devon Torrence	2	19	9.5	0	19
Brian Rolle	1	39	39.0	0	39
Chimdi Chekwa	1	19	19.0	0	19
Todd Denlinger	1	14	14.0	0	14
Thaddeus Gibson	1	5	5.0	0	5
Lawrence Wilson	1	4	4.0	0	4
Austin Spitzer	1	0	0.0	0	0
Andrew Sweat	1	0	0.0	0	0
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>OPP Totals</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>51</b>

### Punt Returns

	No.	Yds.	Avg.	TD	Long
Ray Small	33	273	8.3	0	45
DeVier Posey	3	5	1.7	0	5
Duron Carter	2	24	12.0	0	20
D. Sanzenbacher	2	17	8.5	0	15
<b>OSU Totals</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>0</b> </	

## COVER STORY: GIBSON ONLY JR. LEAVING

## Heyward, Homan Among Those Returning

Continued From Page 1

Ohio State knows all about replacing players who leave school early. Thirteen previously have done so in head coach Jim Tressel's tenure in Columbus, including multiple players in three of the last five years, but Buckeye fans were happy to fret about only one early entry this year.

The return that brought the biggest cheers from the Buckeye Nation was reserved for Heyward.

A four-star recruit from Georgia, Heyward came to Ohio State in something of a recruiting coup for Heacock and co-defensive coordinator Luke Fickell in the class of 2007.

Heyward's verbal commitment on the last day of January that year snapped a string of losing high-profile national recruiting battles, and the success of Fickell and Heacock paid dividends almost immediately.

When starter Lawrence Wilson was lost for the season with a broken leg in the 2007 season opener, Heyward saw his minutes increase. He ascended to the starting lineup at defensive end by the middle of the season and finished his first campaign with 10 tackles for loss while providing a counter punch on one side of the defensive line while Vernon Gholston became a star on the other.

Gholston opted to leave school early the following winter after collecting a single-season school-record 14 sacks. He was eventually replaced by Gibson while Heyward turned in a solid 2008 season on the other side playing both tackle and end.

In 2009, Heyward took another step toward being one of the nation's best defensive linemen with a long line of standout performances, none better than a Nov. 7 showdown at Penn State. He sacked Nittany Lions quarterback Darryl Clark on Penn State's first offensive play, setting the tone for a dominant Ohio State defensive performance. Heyward appeared to beat just about every Penn State offensive lineman by the time the game was over and finished the day with 11 total tackles, including three for loss and a pair of sacks.

Many speculated that Heyward's decision to put his name in the 2010 draft was only a matter of time in coming, but he opted to resist the pros for one more year despite being projected as a possible first-round pick.

"I am excited about next season and am looking forward to being one of the senior leaders of our team," said Heyward, who is due to graduate in June 2011 with a bachelor's degree in human development. "I sat down and talked at length with my family about my situation, and they totally support my decision. I've been blessed to this point. I am just having fun being a college student."

His choice to finish his career as a four-year player follows similar decisions by fellow lineman Doug Worthington and Coleman, both of whom said no to the NFL last January and returned to serve as captains in 2009.

"I learned a lot from seniors like Doug and Kurt and all they were able to accomplish during their senior year," Heyward said. "I would love to be a part of Buckeye tradition like that. I think the upside is very positive."

"I want to help our team achieve the goals of winning another Big Ten title and possibly accomplishing a national championship. If I could win some recognition, that would be great as well. I think I can be a leader for our team, and I know another season will help me become a better player."

The 6-6, 287-pounder has recorded 115 tackles during a three-year career that includes 33 starts. He was named second-team All-Big

## Players Who Left Early Under Tressel

Year	Name	Pos.	Rd. Drafted (Overall Pick)	NFL Team	Replacement(s)
2010	Thaddeus Gibson	LB/DE	N/A	N/A	Nathan Williams
2009	Chris Wells*	RB	1 (31)	Arizona	Dan Herron Brandon Saine Devon Torrence
	Donald Washington	CB	4 (102)	Kansas City	DeVier Posey
	Brian Hartline	WR	4 (108)	Miami	Thaddeus Gibson
2008	Vernon Gholston	DE	1 (6)	N.Y. Jets	Brian Robiskie
2007	Ted Ginn Jr.	WR	1 (9)	Indianapolis	Brian Hartline
	Anthony Gonzalez	WR	1 (32)	New Orleans	Chris Wells
	Antonio Pittman*	RB	4 (107)	Buffalo	Anderson Russell Jamario O'Neal
2006	Donte Whitner*	DB	1 (8)	Pittsburgh	Anthony Gonzalez
	Santonio Holmes	WR	1 (25)	Buffalo	Antonio Smith
	Ashton Youboty*	DB	3 (70)	Denver	N/A#
2005	Maurice Clarett*	RB	3 (101)	Carolina	Ashton Youboty
2004	Chris Gamble	DB	1 (28)	Dallas	Chris Gamble
2003	None				
2002	Derek Ross	DB	3 (75)		
* - Early Enrollee at OSU # - Had already been kicked off team					

Ten after leading the Buckeyes with 7½ sacks in 2009. He had 11 tackles for loss.

"He's going to be great next year," Worthington said after the Rose Bowl. "He'd have my vote for captain. He's going to be a tremendous force on this defense."

The returns of Homan and Chekwa were received with less surprise because neither was projected as a high draft pick, but both will play prominent roles on the 2010 defense nonetheless.

Homan, a 6-0, 229-pounder from Coldwater, Ohio, led the Big Ten champions with 108 tackles in 2009, his second season as a starter at weakside linebacker. He notched a team-high 12 tackles against Oregon and snagged his fifth interception of the season, leaving him tied with Coleman for the team lead.

"I had a long talk with my parents and I want to stay at Ohio State for my senior season," Homan said. "I look forward to being a senior leader and helping try and lead our team to the Big Ten title and national championship. I know this upcoming year will help me improve as a player and also help our team. I believe we can even out-work ourselves from what we did this past season."

"Winning the Rose Bowl was a dream come true for me. I remember watching the 1997 game as a little kid, (and) to get to play in the Rose Bowl and win it was something special. I believe we can have that kind of success again in 2010."

Homan was named Big Ten defensive player of the week Oct. 12 after his performance in Ohio State's 31-13 defeat of Wisconsin when he had 15 tackles, two sacks and a forced fumble.

He has made 19 starts and 215 tackles in his Ohio State career, and his decision to return figures to put him in line to etch his name alongside great Buckeye linebackers such as former Buckeye All-America selections A.J. Hawk and James Laurinaitis.

Homan started alongside Laurinaitis in 2008 and heard comparisons between himself and Hawk when he enrolled early for spring practice as a freshman in 2006. Since those early days, he has progressed well despite enduring several injuries along the way, including a foot problem that robbed him of most of the 2007 season.

That injury led to Homan's being granted a medical hardship waiver, clearing the path for him to be a part of what could be a loaded Ohio State team next fall.

"Right from the first snap, A.J. and James

were made to be icons, so I've had a little different career path, but it's a goal of mine to emulate their playing or their style," Homan said. "Everything happens for a reason. I got hurt, came back and hopefully it all works out for me."

Next December, he is due to receive a degree in consumer affairs, but in the meantime Homan is happy to have a chance to spend one more season playing with his brother Adam, a fullback who will be a sophomore in 2010.

"Anytime you get to play with a sibling," Ross said, "it's always a special thing"

Chekwa has 27 starts under his belt, and the Clermont (Fla.) East Ridge product led Ohio State with seven pass breakups in 2009.

He has 103 career tackles in three years on the field that include two as a starter and one as the team's third cornerback.

"I am not ready to leave Ohio State, and I am looking forward to my senior season," he said. "I prayed about this decision and talked about it with my parents, and I know this is the right decision for me."

"I will graduate next fall, and I am looking forward to being a leader on what can be a very special defense for the Buckeyes. After the Rose Bowl win, we are working toward accomplishing more great things, including another Big Ten title and a run at the national championship."

Chekwa received honorable-mention all-conference honors in 2009 for football and was a member of the Buckeyes' 4x100 relay team that took first place at the 2009 Big Ten Outdoor Championships.

Chris Steuber, an NFL draft analyst for Scout.com, indicated staying in school was the right move for Homan and Chekwa.

"An undersized, but productive defender who possesses tremendous instincts, Homan had a breakout year in '09 and showed great playmaking ability," Steuber said. "He has excellent range and displayed sure tackling technique. He occasionally gets lost in the shuffle, but plays with a high motor and works through the trees."

As for Chekwa, Steuber noted, "He has a great frame, but has to get stronger and play up to his ability. He has great speed, athleticism and can cover as well as anyone in the nation. He just has to put it all together."

Steuber holds Heyward in the same high esteem that many of his colleagues do.

"He's quick off the snap, uses his hands effectively and has the quickness and strength to beat the opposition off the edge," the draft

analyst said. "If he continues to progress, Heyward will be a first-round pick in the 2011 draft."

## Gibson Headed Out

Though he felt the time was right to strike out on his own path, Gibson said he will miss the teammates he is leaving behind. Of course, there was the distinct possibility they would still be his teammates in 2010 if Tressel had chosen to stand in his way.

Said Gibson, "I told Coach Tressel, 'You know what? If you tell me that you want me to come back and we win the national championship this year, I'll (expletive) do it.' He said, 'No, it's not about me, Thaddeus, it's about you and your family.'"

That meant a great deal to Gibson.

"He said he doesn't tell his players whether to stay or go, it has to come from them," Gibson said. "When he said that, I said, 'Coach, I'm leaning toward going but I just can't do it without your blessings.' He said, 'Thaddeus, I'm going to support you in whatever decision you make.' I knew what I wanted to do so just knowing he was going to be there for me if I needed anything – and he didn't think it was a bad idea – it just put me over the edge."

According to Gibson, Tressel found the second-round grade Gibson received from the NFL draft advisory board to be satisfactory for the junior defensive end to leave school early. There is no guarantee Gibson will go that high, of course, but such a rating brings with it reason to believe he could test well at the NFL scouting combine and Ohio State's annual pro day and give a team reason to believe he is worthy of a first-round pick.

Gibson came to Ohio State from Euclid, Ohio, as a four-star linebacker prospect in the class of 2006 and moved to defensive end during spring practice 2008. He was still listed as an end this season, although he played often from a standing position and more resembled an outside linebacker, the role he figures to play in the NFL.

"I'm very familiar with putting my hand down (as a lineman)," Gibson said. "I did it throughout my high school career and here a little bit, so that is something I don't have a problem with. Playing in space is something I love."

"If you ask me, I feel I'm a linebacker at heart. If you ask Coach Heacock, he probably would say the same thing. I'm comfortable with playing defensive end or outside linebacker. I enjoy dropping into coverage, I love rushing the passer, so those are two positions I feel I can handle."

Listed at 6-2, he said he weighed 247 pounds on Jan. 5 but could see himself bulking up to as much as 255 if he felt he would not lose any speed or quickness in doing so.

"Knowing it's possible (to be drafted in the first round), I'd be lying if I didn't say I was anxious about the opportunity," Gibson said. "I know it's going to take hard work and dedication, but I have my coaches behind me so I know I can do it."

"It starts with hard work and dedication, which I'm willing to give, and it starts bright and early tomorrow."

Steuber views Gibson, who is scheduled to graduate in June with a bachelor's degree in African-American studies, as a potential third-round pick with potential for improvement.

"He's quick off the snap, dynamic off the edge and makes a lot of plays in the backfield," Steuber said. "He's still raw and developing his craft as a pass rusher, but if he learns to use his hands more and continues to get stronger – watch out."

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH

# It's Hard To Deny – This One Felt Good

Let's forget this whole unbiased reporter notion for a moment.

While I try to look at Ohio State football with a critical eye – pointing out both the good and the bad – I'll admit it: I always want the Buckeyes to win. I'm an OSU graduate for one thing, and it's hard to not to root for a team that I have followed so closely for more than 30 years. Besides, OSU winning is good for business, and while readers may not always realize it, Buckeye Sports Bulletin is first and foremost a business.

Yes, I always want the Buckeyes to win.

But I *reeeeaaaally* wanted Ohio State to win the Rose Bowl.

I couldn't take any more of the complete lack of respect the five-time defending Big Ten champions were receiving across the nation, especially from those in the national media, most of whom had probably seen a complete Ohio State game about as many times as I had seen an Oregon game. There seemed to be a pack mentality when it came to bashing Ohio State.

I guess what really put me over the edge as the Rose Bowl approached was the almost complete lack of respect the Oregon team seemed to be paying the Buckeyes. Even if the Ducks believed in their superiority, there's an unwritten rule that you don't downgrade an upcoming opponent, if for no other reason than cockiness provides bulletin-board material for the opposition.

I'm not suggesting that teams follow the Jim Tressel rule of making every opponent, even a Youngstown State, seem like the Indianapolis Colts. I'm just saying that teams generally show some respect for an opponent, especially one like the Buckeyes that is the outright champion of a major conference that you are facing in arguably the most prestigious bowl game in the country.

It seemed like the Ducks were spending more time watching ESPN with its Oregon obsession and Buckeye bashing than watching game film because they clearly were underestimating the Buckeyes, and that bugged me. The Civil War game with Oregon State – a 37-33 Oregon victory to cap the regular season – seemed to cement in the minds of the pundits and the Ducks themselves that there was no way the Buckeyes could play with the lightning-fast, quick-strike Oregon offense. The Ducks also seemed to have little fear of Ohio State quarterback Terrelle Pryor.

All of this was utterly disrespectful to the Ohio State defense, which finished the season fifth in the country in both scoring and total defense. I'm sure many national observers, basing their predictions on an Oregon rout primarily on the Buckeyes' recent play in so-called "big games," were not even aware of the prowess of the OSU stud troops. Presumably, though, the Ducks studied game film and should have known not to underestimate the Ohio State defense.

Much of Oregon's confidence and gaudy offensive statistics had been built while playing in the Pac-10, a league where only three teams finished among the top 50 in the country in scoring defense.

As for underestimating Pryor – again, did the Ducks or their ardent supporters in the media watch any film? Was Pryor inconsistent during the season? Yes. Did he make some boneheaded mistakes? Yes. But if you knew anything about the sophomore phenom you knew that he could turn a game with his arm or legs at any time. He just hadn't really put the whole package together during the 2009 season, and he certainly hadn't lived up to his

## THE VIEW FROM 15TH AND HIGH Frank Moskowitz, Publisher

billing as the nation's No. 1 recruit coming out of Jeannette, Pa., in 2008.

Despite the fact their numbers on the ground and through the air were comparable this season, the experts predicted Oregon quarterback Jeremiah Masoli would dominate the Rose Bowl, not Pryor. As I pointed out in this space in the Rose Bowl preview issue, given their statistical similarities, it would be interesting to see how Pryor and Masoli matched up in Pasadena.

Pryor won the battle hands down with 266 yards passing and 72 yards rushing for 338 total yards. Masoli threw for only 61 yards on 9-of-20 passing and rushed for only 9 net yards on six attempts.

Chalk one up for Pryor and chalk one up for the OSU defense.

Pryor added the best passing game of his career to his usual strong running game, while the Buckeye defenders choked off Masoli at virtually every turn.

If it weren't for the Buckeyes' inexplicable lapses in kickoff and punt return coverage, the high-flying Ducks might have scored even fewer than the 17 points they did – a total nearly 21 points below their average coming into the game.

Oregon's three scoring drives, two of which came after kickoffs and one which followed a punt, averaged 45.0 yards. Ohio State, by comparison, had to travel an average of nearly 58 yards on its six scoring marches. That total was skewed by an 18-yard drive to a 45-yard Aaron Pettrey field goal at the end of the first half that was set up by a Ross Homan interception and return to the Oregon 46.

The Buckeyes, who entered the game yielding an average of 20.5 yards on kickoffs, allowed the Ducks to average 28.5 yards per return, returns that set Oregon up at its own 41 on average. At a critical juncture in the game, the Buckeyes allowed Cliff Harris to return a fourth-quarter kickoff 42 yards to the OSU 36.

The Ducks were trailing 26-17 with 6:50 remaining in the contest, but the Buckeyes did not allow a first down and Oregon missed on a 44-yard field-goal attempt. Pryor and the offense then ran out the final 5:10 for the Rose Bowl victory.

Oregon returned just one punt, but that one went for 28 yards, giving them the ball at the OSU 30 early in the second quarter and a short field from which to score its first touchdown and tie the game at 10 apiece.

But kick coverage was about the only area in which even the most critical observer of Ohio State football could complain.

Pryor did have an interception and threw up another quintessential Pryor prayer that Jake Ballard turned into one of the key plays of the game. The 6-6 tight end went high between two defenders to turn the potential blunder into a 24-yard reception for a key first down in the game-clinching, fourth-quarter touchdown drive.

Other than those two plays, Pryor pretty much had his way with Oregon, showing a national television audience the abilities that most Buckeye fans always knew were there. While he has struggled at times through the air, there were always glimpses of what he could do passing. He led the Buckeyes on a game-winning drive against Wisconsin last season with several key completions to really cement his place as the starting quarterback,

and he opened the game against Toledo this season with a perfect 76-yard scoring bomb to Dane Sanzenbacher on the third play from scrimmage.

I think most people would agree this was Pryor's most complete passing game as a Buckeye, and not only did his play through the air catch Oregon completely off-guard, hopefully it will give OSU's offensive brain trust more confidence in their star player's passing ability and make the coaching staff more willing to mix things up on offense next season.

Even with the improved passing, I never like to discount Pryor's uncanny running ability. Against Oregon, he had a game-high 72 yards on 20 carries. Take away the four sacks he was charged with for 19 yards in losses and Pryor gained 91 yards on 16 carries for a 5.7-yard average.

The sophomore signal caller set the tone for the game on the Buckeyes' first drive, a 74-yard touchdown march, when he not only completed five passes including a 13-yard scoring strike to Brandon Saine but also converted a third-and-6 situation with a classic 24-yard run.

I must admit I shuddered as Pryor ran out of bounds on that play because he clearly felt some sort of twinge in the back of his knee, perhaps a result of an injury that had only recently come to light. It apparently proved to be nothing as Pryor went on to dominate the game. But what would have happened had the Buckeyes lost their franchise player so early in the game?

It made me think back to the national championship game with Florida following the 2006 season when Ted Ginn Jr. was lost to injury after returning the game's opening kickoff for a touchdown. The Buckeyes never recovered from the loss of Ginn in that game and went on to be humiliated 41-14 by the Gators.

Which brings us back to the national perception of the Ohio State football team. So much of what people think about the Buckeyes – and the Big Ten for that matter – goes back to that terrible loss to the Gators.

I still have no explanation for how poorly Ohio State played in that game, nor has there ever been any explanation from the Buckeye camp. I always dream that when Tressel retires, he will write a memoir and explain what happened in Arizona that night in a game that has had so much impact on the perception of OSU and Big Ten football.

Hopefully, the win over Oregon in the Rose Bowl will exorcise Ohio State's big-game demons. Even if it doesn't, and even if the Buckeyes lose a bunch of big games in the future, for now I can't help but say, "Take that, ESPN and all the rest of you!"

And pardon me for abandoning the whole unbiased reporter thing for a few moments and saying, "Go Bucks!"

### Defense Wins Championships

Here's something to consider for those of you who crave wide-open offenses and find playing good defense boring. Maybe the Oregon football team should consider it as well.

The top five teams in the nation in total defense – TCU, Alabama, Texas, Florida and Ohio State – finished with a combined record of 63-5 and made up five of the top six teams

in the final Associated Press writers' poll. Only Boise State, which finished 14th in total defense and fourth in the AP poll, kept the top defenses from making a clean sweep of the top five.

The top five teams in the country in total offense – Houston, Nevada, Troy, Texas Tech and Texas A&M – finished a combined 42-24 by comparison. Texas Tech was the only one of the five offensive leaders finishing in the AP top 25. The Red Raiders were No. 21.

### Online Signup Continues

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